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Sick servants of the quill

By Anita Brookner

ROGER L. WILLIAMS: The Horror of Life 58pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £15. 0 297 77883 8

Roger Williams, Distinguished Professor in the Department of History at the University of Wyoming, has drawn together, under his Baudelairean title (but without its

important connotation: *horreur de la vie*, *extase de la vie*, five studies of nineteenth-century French writers who have little in common apart from the fact that they all

clad of an advanced venerable infection. Professor Williams's thesis, that Baudelaire, Jules de Goncourt,

Flaubert, Guy de Maupassant and

Alphonse Daudet were unable to

institute or sustain normal sexual

relationships, had recourse to

prostitutes, contracted their infections

and concealed, obfuscated, or

disguised their lamentable illnesses

behind the guise of dedication to

the undifferentiated ideal of Art, the

great nineteenth-century ideal, the

entirety that does not exist, but

which they called into being as the

religious surrogate, the ultimate

justification of their un-lived lives,

proclaiming that without their particular

afflictions they might not have

given such great service to literature.

Edmond de Goncourt, in fact, put it

about his brother, the loyal and

chaste Zola, was "charitable enough

to believe him. Yet Daudet wondered

if Flaubert's endless search for the right word was not

the result of his overdoing himself

with bromides which slowed his

working tempo down to a frustrating

and protracted nightmare. There is

room for argument on both sides.

But first a word about Professor

Williams, whose book is excellently

written, profoundly disturbing, and

strangely credulous. If Susan Sontag

has written most movingly about

illness as metaphor, Roger Williams

has written about illness as illness,

detailing with fascination and appalling

competence, the various stages of

mortal disease, with its grotesque

and beautiful vocabulary, until the

strange words build up an inevitability

of their own and the race towards

the grave takes on an autonomy

which, in its slinkiness, is almost

an art form in itself. It is actually

a relief when death supervenes,

when the funeral becomes a great

literary apotheosis, and Zola, the

only able-bodied man of letters left

in France, re-enters as pallbearer.

The Romantic notion, which Professor

Williams does not appear to endorse,

is that life is so horrible, so generally

despicable that it is the artistic duty

of a man of higher sensibility to

spurn its vulgar attractions, to

subvert its possibilities, and in

general to go it over and done with,

making as few concessions to

normality as possible. "Art" (and

the word is baleful in this context)

adds a spurious nobility to the

process of avoiding Nature will be

the goal of the life-hater. Writing

may thus be seen as a form of

personality.

But the story does not end there.

Chassez la Nature, elle revient au

galop. Tertiary syphilis, locomotor

ataxia, epileptic convulsions, infantile

premature death, were the

price to be paid, and the return to

Art to Nature was terrible indeed.

In the last month of Jules de

Goncourt's life, Edmond was

obliged to reprimand his adored

and brilliant brother for dealing

normally with his food in a restaurant

after which both men disappeared

into tea, before the vanished

dinners. Dr. Roge, the

were the only words he

could utter, and the nurse asked

mother to remove him from the

hospital, as they could not

tolerate blasphemy.

Professor Williams's method has

been to scrutinize the letters and

memoirs of the writers concerned

and not necessarily their formal

published works except in the case

of Alphonse Daudet, whose *Le*

chroniques, his sufferings, the

memoirs of Baudelaire, Flaubert,

and Maupassant are mainly con-

cerned with their symptoms,

which were horrifyingly num-

berous, their visits to various

watering places, riverine estab-

lishments, or warmer climates

in their search to obtain relief,

their embarrassment of doctors

(for they thought nothing of con-

sulting seven or eight) and, last

but by no means least, the financial

burdens they were obliged to

shoulder. The filiation of these

themes is tenuous and obscure and

may even give rise to further

diagnosis.

In the case of Baudelaire, Flau-

bert and Maupassant, the demands

for or complaints about money are

hysterical and obsessive and have to

do with their expectations from or

responsibilities towards their

mothers. Mme Baudelaire is pun-

ished, financially, for having intro-

duced her son to the horror of life,

while Mmes Flaubert and Maupas-

sant effectively restrict their sons

in the same way in case such sons

should discover the ecstasy of life.

And the need to write and to justify

themselves in the light of their

mothers' disappointment becomes a

form of regression, paid for by a

terrible simulacrum of marriage in

which both mother and son collapse.

By the same token, the writer's mis-

dress, usually chosen for her unsuit-

ability, viz Baudelaire's illiterate

mistress Jeanne Duval, the Gon-

courts' shared Maria, a former

midwife, and Maupassant's andro-

gynous Gisèle, will serve one pur-

pose only, but if we are to believe

Professor Williams, will probab-

ly not be allowed to serve it too well.

Poor Louise Colet, who wanted love

and conversation and a visit to Mme

Flaubert, was looking entirely in the

wrong direction.

It is easy to see how rapidly these

authors become case histories, and

how very possible it is to treat

their lives as instances of inade-

quately realized sexuality, morbid

affliction, and of disputed

diagnosis, without at any point

having to refer to their work as

opposed to their tormented exist-

ence.

The position is further compli-

cated by the fact that many doctors

have been fascinated by the diseases

of great men, and that it has been

fashionable for medical experts to

write their doctoral theses on the

complexity of the writing profession.

Samuel-Auguste Tissot published

his book *De la santé des gens de*

lettres in Lausanne in 1768. He

seems a sympathetic man, full of

anecdotes, and apparently dedicated

to the relief of the manifold ail-

ments suffered by those chained to

the quill. It becomes clear that

practitioners of this craft do not

undertake it without grave risk to

their physical and mental stability.

Dr Tissot, who is a bit of a gossip,

describes two typical cases. L'un

vu un professeur de Berne, très

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Creator and Creation

By David Robey

WILLIAM ANDERSON

Dante the Maker
497pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul.
£18.
0 7100 0322 6

The *Divine Comedy* claims to be the record of an extraordinary personal experience. The *Paradiso* concludes with a vision of the Trinity that reveals the mystery of the Incarnation to Dante in a sudden surge of light, a vision which far exceeds the capacity of human reason and the value of any worldly good. Yet it nonetheless comes as the confining, not the liberating, of the worldly and rational interests expressed in the rest of the poem, including the political arguments with which so much of it is filled. By the end of his journey Dante has understood, as a single whole, the nature of both Creator and Creation. It is this experience of total understanding, if we take him at his word, that is the principal inspiration of the work.

Unfortunately readers who want to know the biographical facts of this inspiration are unlikely to find an easy answer to their questions. Dante tells us that, in the course of a few days before and after Easter 1300, he was saved from a state of sin (the dark wood) through heavenly intervention and the agency of Virgil, was taken through Hell and Purgatory, where he was progressively purified, reunited with Beatrice in the *Barbaric Paradise*, and accompanied by her to the Empyrean, where he received the direct vision of God. But while he says a great deal more than this about himself in the *Comedy*, he does not tell us how the journey relates, if it does, to his actual experience, nor is there any clear external evidence to help our interpretation. The journey image can be read in any one of a number of ways.

As a result, and as a result also of a general academic distrust of problems of the sort, professional students of the *Comedy* tend to leave on one side the question of the work's genesis in its author's mind. This, however, is the question to which William Anderson (who is a publisher and a poet) has given special attention in his new and lengthy biography of Dante. *Dante the Maker* follows a more or less standard design in combining an account of Dante's life and times with a general description and interpretation of his works, but it gives them a special slant. It does this, suggests, by connecting them to a speculative reconstruction of the mental processes by which the *Comedy* was created.

The most notable feature of Mr Anderson's thesis is the suggestion that the poem is the product not of one vision, as is sometimes assumed, but of a series of visions, that of the Trinity at Easter 1300. This gave Dante the idea of a major poem in the vernacular, which Anderson calls the proto-*Commedia*, a first version that Dante either wrote or thought about in the years following his exile from Florence in 1302. A number of further visions helped to change the proto-*Commedia* into the poem we know. One presumes Dante had a shadowy human figure that he recognized in due course to be Virgil, and close as the first of his guides in the poem. The most important involved the rediscovery of Beatrice, late in 1312, in a dream-like experience similar to the allegorical vision in which she figures at the end of the *Purgatorio*. Anderson suggests that it was this vision which led Dante, immediately afterwards, to begin the *Comedy* proper.

This double, in that while it is perfectly possible that Dante should have had a series of visions of this kind, there are no compelling reasons to believe that he did. The main grounds of Anderson's argument in this respect are to be found in the general theory of poetic inspiration, in which he devotes many pages of his book, rather than in Dante's works or any other document. Anderson's argument is that the main grounds of Anderson's argument in this respect are to be found in the general theory of poetic inspiration, in which he devotes many pages of his book, rather than in Dante's works or any other document.

the intensity of the experience from which it derives, and that the experience is likely to take the form, in the first instance, of a visionary message from the unconscious. On the whole it seems unlikely that this will be to many readers' taste.

Apart from this the chapters in which Anderson deals with Dante's life and the background to the *Comedy* provide a learned and fairly readable introduction to his discussion of the poem. The only real criticisms one could make are that this history, though sound, is sometimes fragmentary, anecdotal, or lacking in perspective; that there is a certain amount of rambling in the biography of the type "Dante was an exceptionally sensitive and observant boy", etc.; and more particularly, that too little attention is given to the scholastic, particularly the Thomist, tradition, undoubtedly one of the major influences on Dante's writing. But these fallings are no doubt at least in part a consequence of Anderson's special interest in the question of poetic inspiration.

His interpretation of the *Comedy* is less satisfactory, however, for a number of reasons. One is that it is organized in a somewhat arbitrary manner, tending to go off at tangents, and is thus not particularly easy to read. Another is that a wide range of antecedents, parallels or possible influences are cited in order to explain or clarify aspects of the poem, from the wings of such figures as St Augustine, St Bonaventure, Coleridge, Rilke, and Eliot, and Sufi mystics. But interesting as these points of reference may be, they are not sufficiently differentiated, nor is much attention paid to the distinctive features of Dante's work in relation to them. One notable distinctive feature, the seemingly radical secularism of some aspects of his writings, is hardly mentioned at all.

Thirdly, and more importantly, Anderson adopts and develops, without always offering satisfactory arguments for doing so, a variety of theories concerning the *Comedy*'s meaning and structure that a great many students of Dante will find hard to accept. He is strongly attracted to numerological interpretations of the text, for instance, and also takes for granted that it is characterized throughout by a multiplicity of allegorical meanings. Both of these approaches are very much open to question. Two, in particular, of the allegorical interpretations that he adopts, relating to the Great Circle pilgrimage route and to the suppression of the Order of Templars by Philip the Fair, seem definitely on the eccentric side.

Of course it is not necessarily a criticism of a reading of the *Comedy* to say that it is controversial; and it is also clearly the case that controversial readings are unavoidable in a book as ambitious as this. Anderson's comprehensive interpretation of the whole of Dante's life and work. What is in question in Mr Anderson's study, however, is not so much the theories that he puts forward as the way in which he presents them. In the *Comedy*, in many ways an impressive achievement, perhaps more impressive than some of the foregoing criticisms might suggest. But it would have been a better book if it had not so frequently failed to distinguish between the things we can say that we know about the *Comedy* and those that are merely speculative.

Eye: Borsari's *The Mural Painters of Treviso*, first published in 1960, the allegorical vision in which she figures at the end of the *Purgatorio*. Anderson suggests that it was this vision which led Dante, immediately afterwards, to begin the *Comedy* proper. This double, in that while it is perfectly possible that Dante should have had a series of visions of this kind, there are no compelling reasons to believe that he did. The main grounds of Anderson's argument in this respect are to be found in the general theory of poetic inspiration, in which he devotes many pages of his book, rather than in Dante's works or any other document. Anderson's argument is that the main grounds of Anderson's argument in this respect are to be found in the general theory of poetic inspiration, in which he devotes many pages of his book, rather than in Dante's works or any other document.

The Retired Life of the Demons

This was the fifth heaven, the Angel told him—Whereof Santanail was warden, from some height fallen, A man of sorrows and expert in social problems.

'Metaphorically speaking', spoke the Angel, 'These are but similes and metaphors. They have laboured long and are worn out. Literally speaking, they are greybeards.'

Stretched out huge in length, The aged demons sprawled on rocking-chairs Like companions in a fall.

Satanail raised his creaking bulk. 'Clichés, do you mean, that work damned hard, Are never pensioned off, and last for ever . . . ? He shuddered vastly.

The Angel looked unhappy. A man of bliss, He was subject still to embarrassment.

'We do not envy our nephews the glories in store For them', Satanail remarked. 'In fact, Mr Enoch, Even autumnal leaves have something to contribute.'

'To be sure', said Enoch. 'The fruits of experience . . . The Angel fidgeted. He was not at home here.

'Too old to stand, we sit on committees— And of late, for instance, have devised a scheme To temper homosexual activity in boys' schools By introducing the heterosexual . . .

The Angel turned his face away. There had been angry talk of this, elsewhere.

'Conversely, and according to local needs, To contain pregnancies in girls' schools— The promotion of sodomy in schools for boys . . . Small beer of course, but—how do you say?— It all finds work for the devil's idle hands.'

'How interesting', said Enoch on a note of interest. The aged demons studied their horny palms.

Later they sat down to a light collation. Grace Was gabbled by Satanail. 'Amen', the Angel mumbled. He had no such leisure to look forward to.

'Speaking of fruits . . . Satanail turned to Enoch. The occasional visitor raised his spirits.

D. J. Enright

Bent Water in the Tasmanian Highlands

Flashy wrists out of buttoned grass cuffs, feral whisky burning gravel, jazzy knuckles ajitter on soakages, peaty cupfills, soft pots overflowing, setting out along the great curve, migrating mouse-gathering water, mountain-driven winter water, in the high twed, slipping off its mountains to run faster in its skin, it swallows the above, it floods where it is fed on, it forms at many points and craves outwardly, pleated water shaking out its bedding soil, increasing its scale, beginning the headlong —Bent Water, you could call this level between droplet and planetary, not as staggered by twisting beds laterally but as upped and swayed on its swelling and outstanding own curvatures, its floating top that sweeps impacts sidelong, its event horizon, a harelip round a pebble, mouthless cheeks globed over a boulder, a finger's far-stretched holograph, skinned flow althwart a snag —these flexures are all reflections, motion-glyphs, pitches of impediment, say a log commemorated in a log-long hump of wave, a buried rock continually noted, a squeeze-play through a cracked basal bar, maintaining a foam-roofed two-sided overhang of breakneck rising; uplifted hoseless hosings, fully circular water, flattened water off rock sills, sandwiched between an upper and a lower whizzing surface, trapped in there with airy scatter and mingled high-speed mirrorings; water groined, produced and spiralled —Crowded scrollwork from events, at steepening white velocities as if the whole outline of the high country were being pulled out along these jointing channels, and proving infinite, anchored deeply as it is in the groundwater scale, in the silence around racy breccia yet it is spooling out; the great curve, drawing and driving, of which these are the animal-sized swells and emboldenments won't always describe this upland; and after the jut falls, the inverse towering on gorges, these peaks will be hidden beneath rivers and tree-bark; in electricity, in cattle, on the ocean. Meditation is a standing wave, though, on the black-green inclines of pouring and cascading, slate-dark rush and timberworker's tea bulging, buttocks, wings, it is mother and history and swank here till our wave is drained of water. And as quick it includes the writhing remote enough perhaps, within its close clean film. Or to watch it after pouring down the slants of our animality and be hypnotized to rest by it? So much detail's unlikely, for hypnosis; it looks like brotherhood sought at a dreamer's remove and, in either vision, laws of falling and persistence: the continuous beat round a whistling stone, bridling upstills after swoops, echo-forms, arches built from above and standing on flourish, clear starry, translucent honey-staked starostories—

Les A. Murray

PIERRE BOURDIEU:
La Distinction
Critique sociale du jugement
670pp. Paris: Minuit.

When Nancy Mitford launched a general conversation about non-upper-class speech, some rebuked her for raising very non-U topics; it may be in bad taste to write a book on taste at all. However, a monumental study of modern French taste should earn a special success in England, where we are always fascinated by the strategies of social pretension. Pierre Bourdieu's *La Distinction* is no sudden excursion into the sociology of good taste. A distinguished anthropologist, he directs the Centre de Sociologie Européenne in Paris, edits and writes in *Actes de Recherche en Sciences Sociales* and has published many important and profound studies in anthropology and sociology.

With his colleagues Bourdieu has been studying the distribution of artistic judgment in France for nearly twenty years. Over time several books and many articles on the subject have appeared. *La Distinction* (1976) most directly prepares the ground for the present study. There he traced the way that French education streams different categories of young people into socially appropriate parts of the established occupational structure. It manages to keep opening more and more educational opportunity without ever disturbing the old pattern of recruitment to social class. Though the system looks like a meritocracy, social background is still the strongest predictor of academic success. From this well-established point the present work takes off.

The scope of its argument is very ambitious, being conducted at two levels simultaneously, philosophic and sociological. The book is also difficult to read, partly because of its style of writing and partly because of a distracting layout. For review it may help to interpret it as a dramatic work of which the general theme is an attack on doctrines of pure aesthetics. This means any philosophy which sets open-handed hospitality to family and friends. The character is somewhat overdrawn, perhaps necessarily for the size of the scene. But there is good reason why the hero only appears on stage for brief glimpses. He never gets himself, and very much to the point, Bourdieu's target includes both philosophies which attribute to beautiful things a quality which is independent of any seductive or useful features and those which attribute to human beings a faculty for recognizing beauty as an independent of functional considerations.

But the reader should take care not to be swept along too fast. A theory about the nature of aesthetic judgment is not the same as a doctrine about what works of art should be like. To isolate a cognitive process as a distinctive form of artistic expression is not to say that artistic expression is only found in rarefied, detached and content to characterize his chosen philosophical target by quoting from Plato, Schopenhauer and Kant. Without discussing it deeply he mounts what he calls a vulgar critique of pure criticism, for which Kant is made a whipping-boy. The objection by Ortega y Gasset, inspired by being exclusive criticism that is not popular and implicitly anti-popular. Such a tradition divides society into mutually antagonistic classes. Bourdieu joins the protest. He warns against philosophy that considers creativity to be tainted when it is involved in any political, commercial, pedagogic or decorative function and which only exalts pure art-forms totally disengaged from other human concerns. His theory is with the divide and conquer potential of the pure art doctrine. The book is offered as a demonstration of how the legitimating of art as a set of professions and industries maintains a caste system in contemporary society.

This being the theme, the general setting of the play, how high culture is legitimized in contemporary France. The book is Brechtian; it could have been tragic if the spirit of the little man who is the hero/victim were crushed by what is done against him. If the working classes did not know that they are being excluded from high culture, or if they did know and also cared, pathos and tragedy would dominate. But among all their other injuries, of which they are well aware, the working classes hardly feel scarred by this one. Making virtue of necessity, warm in their family life and convivial cafés, they can bear the hardship of being excluded from high culture. Bourdieu draws a convincing picture of the greatness of the divide between the judgment of the cultural dominators and the culturally dominated. Each has a standard of basic humanity, decency and proper discrimination on which the other division of society falls. The dominating class cherishes a semi-bestial image of the classes populaires (the working classes of British sociological analysis), whose lusty, earthy and untutored taste contrasts with legitimate taste and justifies it. In their turn, the working classes subscribe to a complementary image of upper-class disorder and beastliness: they mock the miming manners and sexual ambiguities of a social life not founded on the sexual division of labour, dubbing men who are not manual workers as peders, and so on. They deplore modern painting as deforming of nature, experimental photography as a waste of film. They never go to avant-garde theatre that treats of their plight. However, their resentment and dislike of modern and classical art is actually good for the legitimating industry, which thrives by keeping its treasures untainted by popular approval.

It suits Bourdieu's plot for the working-class hero to be drawn in a certain image. Attitudes we have seen elsewhere ascribed to dockers, lorry-drivers, construction-workers and other heavy manual workers are here idealized and attributed to a mass of ordinary people with whom the privileged, educated bourgeoisie contrasts itself. The hero here reveals in his virility: eating and drinking heartily, laughing and blowing his nose noisily, he does everything manfully, with open-handed hospitality to family and friends. The character is somewhat overdrawn, perhaps necessarily for the size of the scene. But there is good reason why the hero only appears on stage for brief glimpses. He never gets himself, and very much to the point, Bourdieu's target includes both philosophies which attribute to beautiful things a quality which is independent of any seductive or useful features and those which attribute to human beings a faculty for recognizing beauty as an independent of functional considerations.

High culture and low

By Mary Douglas

In the required demographic information, the respondent was asked about his furniture, leisure, favourite singers, books, films, painters, museums and galleries. He was asked to select which of the following opinions on music matched best to his own:

Great music is complicated. I like great music but I don't know it. I like great music, for example Strauss' waltzes.

All good music interests me. On the subject of painting likewise I had to select from: wists. Painting doesn't interest me. Museums are not my strong point. I don't appreciate them. Painting is difficult, to say anything about it you have to know. I am not a painter, but I am a collector. Abstract painting interests me as much as the classical schools.

Once sorted into socio-economic categories, the answers focus a beam of inquiry onto consumption patterns. Bourdieu's quarrel with pure aesthetics naturally allows him to include the purchase of ballet and concert tickets and visits to museums along with other consumption. The same social pressures which legitimate high culture, legitimate also the life-style of its consumers. Assortative processes work to bring into harmony the pattern of tastes in each home, so that life partners who feel they were made for each other because they like the same sports or music or literature, choose their friends for the same reasons; they are engaged in an enterprise which demands so much discrimination that even their furnishings and food will be chosen to match. This approach closely resembles the analysis of furnishings as an object-code proposed earlier by Basil Bernstein, while the principles of structural analysis applied to modern life go back to Roland Barthes. At every level above that of the working classes, people are making distinctions in the name of beauty and using that title to separate themselves from the masses. The level below, though not from that above. The hard, clear lines are drawn against what they do not like. Among the residual areas of what they may like without losing caste there is scope for choice.

Bourdieu describes only sketchily the principles by which he gets his picture of consumption classes. He apologizes for this; the work is still in progress, some of it is coming out in articles, the methodology will be the subject of a separate book. Much has been published already in *Actes de Recherche en Sciences Sociales*. He explains as much as he considers necessary for the present study. The concept of human capital, used by educational sociologists and Chicago economists in a rather narrow way, is here expanded to include the symbolic capital, capital, symbolic capital and honorific capital. Cultural capital is based upon educational qualifications, but it includes subsequent self-education in various ways. Social capital is the advantage that comes to a child from a home well-endowed with cultural capital. Honorific capital means those forms of civic recognition that accrue to a successful life in the top echelons of industrial society. Symbolic capital is mostly available to writers and artists, who can symbolize their virtuous commitment to social criticism without necessarily doing anything to disturb the balance of social forces. It is convenient to think of holdings in these four kinds of capital as spiritual resources; combined with economic resources they form a personal patrimony.

In all industrial countries, a close correlation holds between three things: father's occupation, own education and own economic opportunities. Essentially Bourdieu's method is to split these components. He draws up a sociogram of the dominant classes. On a horizontal axis, he starts from the patrimonial mix in which a lot of situation comes with a lot of money; he then moves to those who have made up equality of both education and money; a third axis with the last patrimonial mix, which gives more money than education. He then draws a vertical axis with social capital, which he playfully calls "ancient lineage" in the bourgeoisie, but

which is calculated on the father's occupation. Those with a lot of money and a lot of education tend to belong to the established bourgeoisie which is marked at the top end of the social capital axis. The new arrivals at the bottom are a branch of the *petite bourgeoisie*, who are not so submissive to the canons of legitimate culture as established members, especially if they are in the business of art-production.

Now we have to translate Bourdieu's occupational grades into English grades that slot intelligibly into the general categories of *bourgeois* and *petite bourgeois*. Then we have to translate the tastes. A preference for the interior decoration of the home to be "harmonious" or "conformable", or "intimate" is no problem, but what does "composed" mean? Pull marks to the 41 per cent of "services médico-sociaux", and "artisans d'art" who at least knew that "composed" meant what they liked. But who are they?

The book includes a chapter on the sources of its data, which are many and therefore as difficult to reconcile with each other as to match to our own Registrar-General's categories. The tables for the popular classes name unskilled and industrial workers, agricultural workers, supervisors and workers in the service industries. Some tables for the *petite bourgeoisie* include craftsmen, small businesses, employees, middle administrative grades, technicians, teachers and new entrants to the *petite bourgeoisie*. Each of the major divisions is internally divided into a dominant and a dominated sector.

The intellectuals form one sector of the dominant elite, and include the higher grades of the civil service, engineers, academics and anyone who holds his position by

accumulating capital. They honour themselves by their austere intellectualism in contrast to the bourgeois taste for luxury. Their amusements are provincial museums rather than the great Paris exhibitions, which favour *avant-garde* theatre, which anyway happens to be cheaper. At the extreme, they include the Left-Bank artists. Lacking the means to indulge a taste in rare antiques, they substitute a taste for rustic, Romanian carpets instead of Persian rugs, for restored farmhouse interiors of the family manor, for lithographs and reproductions in place of old paintings. They are critical of the existing moral order, so, according to Bourdieu, expressing a meritocratic revolt against a society founded on principles other than scholastic attainment. Always on the side of novelty, as leaders of taste in the 1960s they liked Kandinsky, Picasso and Boulez. It turns out that these are the people who like their homes to look "composed" rather than "intimate". They have even turned against traditional cooking in favour of foreign gourmet food or exotic eating-places. Bourdieu sees them as the dominated sector of the dominant class, but according to his description they do most of the legitimating and their judgment seems rather independent of *bourgeois* taste.

The other sector of the dominant class (the *bourgeois*) comprises the liberal professions and industrialists. They have plenty of money to indulge their tastes in luxury and comfort to austerity. They are the *rive-droite* patrons of boulevard theatre and concerts. They like jewelry and ornate decoration, they buy foreign cars, they ski, water ski, go hunting, play tennis. As to legitimate art, they do not experiment; they prefer work which has been sacralized by

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commentary

Close up

By Galen Strawson

Loulou
Various cinemas

Maurice Pialat is the most acclaimed unacclaimed film director in France—but it is of necessity a transitional state, not only because of the contradiction in his name, but also, in Pialat's case, because of the excellence of his films. His most recent, *Loulou*, is a work of striking naturalism—everything about the characters is wholly plausible; not only (although especially) their dialogue, but also their demeanour, the play of feelings on their faces, their laughter, their anger and their situation. The inconclusive fights are exactly right. Watching the family lunch in the suburbs of Paris, with everyone talking at once, one is surprised by the thought that there is a camera there; the more so, perhaps, when one considers that Pialat always films fairly close up, adopting, as the technical basis of his avowed realism, the constraint of working with a maximum focal length of 70-80mm, and preferring 40-50mm lenses, "the most realistic lenses". One may doubt the wisdom of this restriction, or its justification by reference to realism, but it gives a strong formal unity to the film.

Loulou is a friendly but fearless leather-jacketed layabout, in *loulou*, in *gros loulou*, and Gérard Depardieu steps effortlessly into the part. At a discotheque he meets Nelly (Isabelle Huppert), squalling with her lover André (Guy Marchand) of three years' standing, who is also her boss at the advertising agency where she works. Nelly ends up in bed with Loulou; it collapses under the weight of her job for life with Loulou in small cafés and hotel beds. Later they take a flat (implausibly cheaply). Their relationship, while sexually passionate, is enormously good-humoured and affectionate. Although they are from different

class backgrounds, the film has no dark Lawrentian colours, being concerned not at all to stress the theme of sexual fascination across class barriers and the role-playing and *manœuvre* for to which it almost inevitably gives rise, but rather the extent to which their class difference simply fails to concern them in the genuineness of their affection.

Short of money, Nelly returns to her job; then, pregnant by Loulou, loses it again. Loulou is enthusiastic about her pregnancy, but makes very little effort to get a job, insisting that he will do so when the baby arrives, not before. Nelly cannot trust him, and has an abortion. The film ends in his drunken dependency at her lack of trust; but it seems clear that their relationship is by no means over.

It has been claimed that Pialat's work has its roots in the French realist tradition of the 1930s. But this is dubious. For that tradition, although "realist" in so far as it took the lives of ordinary people as its subject, contained fundamentally sentimental in its outlook, and unconsciously melodramatic in its inclinations. Depardieu directed by Pialat is not Jean Gabin, and *Loulou*, by contrast with the 1930s, more fully deserves the title of "realist": both on account of the evident directness of its inspiration in ordinary life (in what Heldigger calls "average everydayness"—albeit the average everydayness of a love affair) and on account of the success with which it recreates that life. Nothing is romanticized; the protagonists' lives are utterly unheroic, and (pace President Reagan) rightly so.

There is a sense of "realist" in which a work in the realist genre cannot be bad, for to be bad is to be unrealistic, so that success is actually a condition of belonging to the genre. *Loulou* is profoundly realist in that sense; and although it is neither a great film nor a particularly profound one, it is a work of great skill, and is both remarkable and charming in its entirely convincing portrayal of enduring affection and attraction.

Side by side in Scarborough

By Hilary Spurling

Suburban Strains
Round House

Not the least engaging of Alan Ayckbourn's many plays is the one that, unlike pretty well any other comic genius in the theatre between Pinter and Pinter, he has never let himself be fooled into thinking he was a serious playwright. He wrote what turned out to be his first big hit, *Relatively Speaking*, fifteen years ago because by his own account, keeping tourists off the streets of Scarborough on rainy nights seemed a perfectly good reason for writing a play, and no doubt he had some equally practical purpose in mind for his latest "musical play", though it is hard to guess quite what.

Suburban Strains (which transferred last week from Scarborough to the Round House) is the story of a couple of young hopefuls who fall in love, marry, come to blows and end in a spot of frank-pansy on the side before coming up again in a song that suggests Patricia Strong strangely dated with the *Private Eye* laureate, E. J. Thubbs: "Happiness is something that is never yours by right, why not seek it today? And 'good night' tonight?" For all I know, this type of thing goes down well in poker work on Scarborough's landladies' walks. Certainly the play gives a vivid impression of the sort of wintry seaside resort where glum couples luridly gossip on hazy beds in freezing hotel bedrooms with testy neighbours banging on the ceiling.

Conquests, only confirms the general listless air of a leftover or discard. The best thing in it is the heroine's attempt to tackle both the frightful cold and her unenthusiastic lover by unpacking a plastic silk pocket-handkerchief-sized nightie with the warning, "It may have to remain fully clothed underneath." It is the quintessential cry of British bedroom comedy as opposed to French farce where Feydeau's force is powered by lust, the driving force of *The Norman Conquest* is an overwhelming reluctance on practically everybody's part to go to bed with anybody else.

Caroline's nightdress in *Suburban Strains* represents a last faint flicker of the manicled exuberance with which Norman packed his own pyjamas ("Get in, you brutes, in, in..."). The tops are all right, it is the bottoms that are the problem. For the fiasco at East Grinstead. Otherwise the evening might have been designed as an anthology of all the tired and emotional clichés that have made the British musical comedy for enervation and flaccidity. Admittedly, romantic love has never been Ayckbourn's strong suit. But fans have a right to expect something less than on married bliss ("Treacle Sponges/Angel/pls/We're so soppy/He and I"), let alone on full-scale disaster, here invoked might wear her hands off.

We are one more pair of weary "dancers" who, like the floor we hoped for more. Now we've asked the band to play. Our last request, Paul Todd's tunes are limper still, a sort of *Sondheim* and *Sat* day with the 7/11 missing. There are some nice confessions, notably from Marcia Warren and Gary Gaze, in a mixed bunch of stick parts and on dancing to speak of, which is a bonus in a British musical.

The relics of Dizzi-Ben-Dizzi

By Stephen Koss

Dizzi and Beaconsfield
Low Memorial Library, Columbia

By his own count, Benjamin Disraeli died twice. The first time was in 1876, when he entered the "Elysian fields" as Earl of Beaconsfield. Thereafter, as Lytton Strachey later put it, he moved like "an assiduous mummy from dinner party to dinner party" (with an historic detour to Berlin) until the spring of 1881, when he lapsed into a fatal illness. As he qualified pre-eminently as his own maker, it is anyone's guess how he went to meet beyond the grave. Perhaps it was Prince Albert, for whom he reportedly declined to carry a message from his widowed monarch and fellow author.

The centenary of the second and more emphatic of Disraeli's deaths is now fittingly commemorated by an exhibition of Disraeliana in the tomb-like rotunda of Columbia University's Low Memorial Library. Entitled *Dizzi and Beaconsfield*, as if to acknowledge the double life-time of its subject, the display will be open to the public until February 27. The items on view do not include the air-cushion which Sir Philip Rose thoughtfully provided as a more comfortable deathbed. But assorted other "emblems of mortality"—and immortality—are amply manifest.

The core of the exhibition comes from a private collection, recently presented to the Rare Books and Manuscripts Library at Columbia by

William B. Liebmann, curator of the Herbert H. Lehman Collection at the university's School of International Affairs. Fifty-five years ago, Mr. Liebmann began his pursuit of Disraeli, whose artifacts he obtained from out-of-the-way sources in London, New York, New Haven and Syracuse. Initially drawn to Lord Brougham, Mr. Liebmann was converted from Whiggery to Tory Democracy by the biographical volumes of Monypenny and Buckle. "I have always been fascinated by what the French call the spirit of contradiction," he writes in the February number of *Library Columns*, the journal of the Friends of the Columbia Libraries. And, as exhibited here, Disraeli epitomized that spirit.

The novelist claims pride of place, with first editions of all the celebrated works in which Michael Poni, writing in the *TLS*, has discerned the qualities of "first-rank" talent and a "revolutionary mind". While *A Year at Harcourt*, authoritatively ascribed to Disraeli's co-authorship, is not available, there is a copy of another curiosity, *The Voyage of Captain Papanaki*, courtesy of the Newport Morgan Library. Other items were loaned by Gordon Ray, chairman of the Friends and a redoubtable bibliophile.

The copy of *The Young Duke*, Disraeli's second novel, bears an inscription to Mrs. Sara Austen, a "friend" of a different sort, who had been instrumental in securing the publication of *Yvonia Grey*. Autograph letters, in relatively short supply, include exchanges between Disraeli and political associates as well as some between Isaac D'Israeli and his publisher. Of less

literary merit, but redolent "the spirit of contradiction" are first editions of Disraeli to Lytton Strachey, and the "political biography" of Lord George B. tinck.

The political side is represented chiefly through cartoons, many by the pages of *Punch*, and a few effective for their familiarity. Enough, Disraeli is variously depicted as Don Juan, but an 1878 *Punch* shows him as the "Dizzi-Ben-Dizzi" orphan of several portraits of George Austen, who made a specialty of illustrating Disraeli on stage (for the first time in 1911) and on screen (1921 and again, with the benefit of music and other memorabilia, to create the flavour of the Victorian period, which Disraeli did much to accentuate. Indeed, there is a silk mourning scarf, brodered with his pensive romance. There is also an ink-warfare jar, festooned with quotations from the novels which betray an employed the same dark palette to convey the narrow roads, the courtyard, and the stairway to his rooms in the rue de Lille, while his sharply observed watercolours of Parisian street people—workmen, sailors on leave—echo the nineteenth-century graphic traditions of England and France, in which Hopper, like Sloan, was well versed.

As the winter passed into spring the following year, he was drawn to the light and openness of the Seine and its banks. The paintings made then and subsequently, on his other visit to Paris before 1910, are luminous, buoyant in mood, and tackled with a marvellous freedom and fluency, the pale blue sky sizzling behind solidly shadowed mansard roofs and creamy white buildings, the trees about to break into leaf. The river itself swells a pale grey-green beneath passing boats. When he returned to America, this optimistic sparkle flickered in the summer scenes he painted of New England, away from the heavy landscape of the cities. The master of the ringing and tall notes of the viceroy of transatlantic civilization. Turning the traditional distinction between the old and new worlds on its head, the paintings make Europe appear fresh and youthful, America weary. Such interpretations are fortunate, as evidence against Hopper's mastery of the medium.

The next production at the Citizens' Theatre will be *Blood Red Roses*. The play, which has been on tour, is directed by the author. It runs in Glasgow from February 17 to 28.

It is a play that the title of the murder of Raman, who was so much less important than she was in real life, that see her as something more than merely power-hungry and critical. The costumes and lighting create an appropriately somber atmosphere.

In another striking way Guise is vulnerable, his wife commits adultery with one of the King's "minions". Marlowe's intent, it seems to have been psychological. But the play as we have it is too crude to convey this consistently. In many places it is performed only as a charade or burlesque. The murder of Marlowe on stage is horrendous, even by Elizabethan standards, nor mention the references to slaughtered innocents off-stage. No doubt the *Massacre* can be seen as a forerunner of the Theatre of Cruelty, but it is so naive that our serious interest is not engaged.

The admirable Citizens' Company of Glasgow have set about this revival in the right way. They go in for a full-blooded Elizabethan performance, fast-moving, full of gusto, with a good use of stylized gesture, rhetorical stylization, and a symbolic tableau. The production stops short of giving the play a full text is given, and it is an element of parody, of self-parody, is evident in the way that many Elizabethan plays intentionally include that.

The forty or so parts are played by only seven actors, who take on a variety of roles, some of which are the "non-naturalistic" settings and scenes of fluidity of movement, only one of which is a scene-breaker to carry out much of the doubling. The Guise of Robert Gwilym is impressively taut

and hatchet-faced. And Jill Spence brings so much vivacity to the role of Catherine de Medici, when she made so much less important than she was in real life, that see her as something more than merely power-hungry and critical. The costumes and lighting create an appropriately somber atmosphere.

The University of Glasgow has set about this revival in the right way. They go in for a full-blooded Elizabethan performance, fast-moving, full of gusto, with a good use of stylized gesture, rhetorical stylization, and a symbolic tableau. The production stops short of giving the play a full text is given, and it is an element of parody, of self-parody, is evident in the way that many Elizabethan plays intentionally include that.

The wide open spaces

By Celina Fox

Edward Hopper: The Art and the Artist
Hayward Gallery.

It is difficult to believe that this is the first exhibition devoted to the work of Edward Hopper to be held in Britain and that no public collection here owns any example of his paintings. His images seem so familiar: the railroads and gas stations, hotel lobbies and bedrooms, restaurants and bars, slicked on celluloid into the setting for endless brief encounters. Yet for all the easy equation of his powerful images with the popular view of American life, this exhibition also indicates the strength of Europe's attraction for Hopper. Europe helped to give him a new confidence of technique, and it was not until some time after he returned to America for good in 1930 that he slowly turned away from his sophisticated allure to develop, instead, an individual, hermetic vision of his own country which appears, in contrast, remarkable for its calculated sobriety.

Hopper's technical facility is evident from his student days at the New York School of Art in the early 1900s under the influential teacher Robert Henri. The self-portraits and small-scale figure studies recall in their total range and handling the best of the previous generation of American painters who learnt from Daubigny, Manet and Degas. When he first went to Paris in 1906, he employed the same dark palette to convey the narrow roads, the courtyard, and the stairway to his rooms in the rue de Lille, while his sharply observed watercolours of Parisian street people—workmen, sailors on leave—echo the nineteenth-century graphic traditions of England and France, in which Hopper, like Sloan, was well versed.

As the winter passed into spring the following year, he was drawn to the light and openness of the Seine and its banks. The paintings made then and subsequently, on his other visit to Paris before 1910, are luminous, buoyant in mood, and tackled with a marvellous freedom and fluency, the pale blue sky sizzling behind solidly shadowed mansard roofs and creamy white buildings, the trees about to break into leaf. The river itself swells a pale grey-green beneath passing boats. When he returned to America, this optimistic sparkle flickered in the summer scenes he painted of New England, away from the heavy landscape of the cities. The master of the ringing and tall notes of the viceroy of transatlantic civilization. Turning the traditional distinction between the old and new worlds on its head, the paintings make Europe appear fresh and youthful, America weary. Such interpretations are fortunate, as evidence against Hopper's mastery of the medium.

Most frequently, Hopper devised a set with angles, where the characters are contained, boxed in by arches, railway coaches, balconies or room settings as if against a great, threatening outdoors. Hopper tested this impression by subtle distortions of the first drawings. A perfectly "normal" sketch looking down a staircase to an open door takes on a claustrophobic quality when the perspective is altered and the distant part of the scene is truncated and the landscape outside looms up from the very doorstep.

The Edward Hopper exhibition continues at the Hayward until March 29, after which it goes to Amsterdam, Dordrecht, Chicago and San Francisco. The Hayward Museum, which mounted the show, has also provided a touring exhibition, *Edward Hopper: The Formative Years*, which is in Newport until February 14, Edinburgh from February 28 to April 5, and then in Manchester and before being shown in Llandudno from August 14 to September 30.

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"California Morning" (1956).

"Getting over Europe" took Hopper, he said, ten years. During this time he still exhibited his Paris paintings, and American subject-matter seems to have entered via his graphic work in illustrations, etchings and the watercolours, the sale of which allowed him finally, in 1924, to concentrate wholly on painting. This was also the time when he married Jo Myron, and the self-contained privacy of their life together over the next forty years, during which they kept the same studio on Washington Square North, seems to be reflected in his work.

Hopper's paintings were a very individual means of expression in which efforts to resolve formal problems combined with the introduction of amorphous impressions. He himself rarely talked about anything more than the formal aspects, rejecting simplistic explanations of the inner mood hinted at in his work. He specifically dissociated himself from the "American Scene" painters, particularly as represented by the provincial chauvinism of the Midwest Regionalists, who he believed caricatured America. But his own opacity has encouraged the use of his work as a ready metaphor for the alienation of the country at large, his privacy for what is often described as the isolation of "the American condition", the loneliness of the stranger prey to lurking fears of the unknown. In contrast to the angst, styliness and bonhomie of Europe, Hopper's paintings of America seem to express a deep unease at optimistic expectations and instead to dwell on the thinness of the veneer of transatlantic civilization. Turning the traditional distinction between the old and new worlds on its head, the paintings make Europe appear fresh and youthful, America weary. Such interpretations are fortunate, as evidence against Hopper's mastery of the medium.

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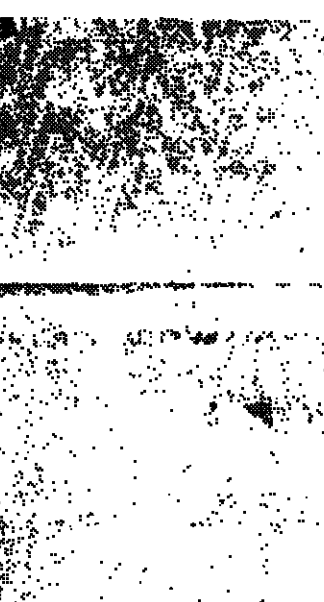
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In a rare articulation of his purpose, the artist said of "Office at Night" that he was trying "to give the sense of an isolated and lonely office interior rather high in the air, with the office furniture which has a very definite meaning for me". The improbably angled room, carved out of some larger space by partitions, is made the more curious by the introduction of three sources of light, one from the dark outside. In "Conference at Night", which is unfortunately not in the Hayward show, the artificial light streaming in through the window is the only illumination left, throwing the figures into a more sinister relationship. Like a budget-conscious stage designer, Hopper used his favourite devices and props obsessively: the rather solid quadrilaterals of sunlight striking cheerless interiors, the dark tunnels of trees at night, curtains billowing in windows, half hooded with blinds.

If Hopper manipulated space with ease, it is a dexterity matched by his control of the emotive and tonal values of colour. He specialized in the umbers and terracottas of American small-town housing, the faded green of shop fronts. And nobody used the more difficult, less flattering and most artificial shades of green to such effect, displayed to special advantage in harsh night light. It is the green of baize, contrasting with warm mahogany fittings, it rolls down hotel lobbies on tawdry carpets and curves, round the window ledge of the "Night-hawks" café; it deepens to a sinister inky green in night forests and brightens to the flashiness of the lawn in "Pretty Penny".

Almost as an afterthought there are the people, placed *in situ* like walk-on actors, and with about as much to say to one another. Hopper's women are all apparently based on his wife, are dated up with fashionable hairstyles and excessive cosmetics, their figures trussed like mail-order mannequins, charm-school ankles neatly placed in black court shoes. In "Summer" a woman in a straw hat and skimpy frock is poised on the step, more than prepared for some joyless conquest. In "People in the Sun", painted towards the end of his life, two figures sit like dummies, lips shut without expression, staring at the blue range of hills on the horizon, expressing no pleasure in each other's company, the sun or, indeed, their country.

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Oxford University Press

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Edited by Ian Brownlie

For this second edition, Professor Brownlie has included some significant materials which have emerged in recent years, such as the Final Act of the Helsinki Conference, the United Nations Declaration of Protection from Torture, and the judgement of the European Court of Human Rights in *The Sunday Times* case. Second edition £22.50 paper covers £11.95

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Jonathan Harrison

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Neil Cooper

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From the divorce-court records of Rouen during the short period of liberal legislation the author draws a vivid account of the petitioners, the causes and pretexts of divorce, and the role of neighbours and relatives, with much revealing detail of contemporary social conditions. From a specific study of this kind the reader may observe the broader consequences of a law which made divorce available in a society breaking away from the Catholic tradition and the tenets that had been the basis of a family law. £18.50

Islamic Society and the South Asian Frontier

The Mappilas of Malabar 1498-1922

Stephen Frederic Dale

This is a study of the Muslims of Kerala, South

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Crisis in Coventry

By Valerie Pearl

CHARLES PHYTHIAN-ADAMS:
Desolation of a City
Coventry and the Urban Crisis of
the Late Middle Ages
350pp. Cambridge University Press.
£16.50.
0 521 22604 X

This latest addition to the growing number of urban histories in the early modern period presents a community study of Coventry based, in the author's words, on "as many aspects of town life as the sources permit". According to Charles Phythian-Adams, the historian's task is to study change as it affects a whole generation and in all its manifestations, not simply to extrapolate from one subsidy or other listing, or from the effects of plague or even a successive set of bad harvests.

The generation he is concerned with lived in Coventry between 1500 and 1530. By then Coventry's decline dated back more than a century, although it had been slow: even in 1507, the government appears to have deemed it third in rank to London and York in terms of disposable wealth. By 1550, the population had sunk from around 10,000 in 1377 to its nadir of under 5,000. The city would never regain its earlier pre-eminence. The decline, caused mainly by the flight of textiles to rural areas and the loss of land to agriculture, was accelerated by a spectacular period of economic and financial dislocation aggravated by harvest failures: the crisis of 1518-25. The book concentrates on this one short-term crisis, whose effects were felt as far away as London and even beyond.

By good chance, Coventry possesses uniquely and only the Subsidy listing of 1524 (the listing of Leicester provided W. G. Hoskins with his evidence for the social structure of sixteenth-century towns which this book now challenges), but three other listings of inhabitants from around the same year,

drawn up ward by ward, so allowing its historian to resurrect an entire urban community in terms of household size, numbers of servants, craft and municipal status and relative wealth. Such information, supplemented by a study of company records and the city's Council Books, has enabled Phythian-Adams to expose the social structure of the town and show how this was distorted by the crisis of 1518-25 as well as by longer-term economic factors and by the heavy charges incurred by municipal office-holding and civic ceremony.

Readers who have come to expect from the work of social historians the excitement of a *Montaigne* may be disappointed at first by this book. The author sticks closely to social structure and touches only glancingly on the eccentricities of individual life or the life of the spirit: formal education, for example, receives mention only in a footnote. The ceremonial occasions, however, which bound the community together are invoked to explain the stability of city life, which largely persisted even in the face of continuing economic and financial disaster.

Phythian-Adams's achievement is to have provided us with a solid body of information relating to urban social structure which will change permanently received views on the late medieval English community, including such questions as the size of households, the number of servants employed in each, the ratio of journeymen to masters, and the pattern of wealth distribution in the city's wards. He touches on the status of women and children, and produces evidence that the public and business role of women expanded during the century rather than diminished, as is usually suggested. Incidental information reveals the proportion of housing owned by the social fractions or guilds of Trinity and Corpus Christi (such corporately owned property may have amounted to as much as one-third of the total housing stock).

The conclusion to be drawn is that municipal society, even in a town in rapid economic decline and hit by heavy governmental financial

demands in the 1520s, was nevertheless more stable and less anarchic than has usually been assumed. More precisely and importantly, the population was living above the poverty line than Professor Hoskins calculated for Leicester in his famous extrapolation from the Subsidy Act of 1524 (published in 1962 in his book *Provincial Towns*). Phythian-Adams shows beyond dispute that in Coventry, householders exempted from paying subsidies for owning less than £2 value in goods were nevertheless not living without means—which is not, of course, to say that they were either prosperous or well-off. For example, a high proportion of those exempted lived in houses whose rentals were in excess of the poorest cottages and could never have been afforded by men who were destitute. Again, a substantial minority of the city's poor employed servants in their houses. Many of them were journeymen whose annual pay, taken together with the usual payments in kind, amounted to more than the £2 minimum laid down in the Act. So it is plain that the view that everyone lived at or below the poverty line must now be rejected. A few historians have long felt disquiet about Hoskins's evidence, but only now do we have a fully documented and conclusive refutation of the destruction of the 1520s, among the worst years in Coventry's history, affected neither two-thirds, nor a half, nor even a third of the population, but a proportion somewhere in excess perhaps of 20 per cent. In this sense, the evidence, sixteenth-century urban history will need some fresh thinking, particularly in regard to the numbers of poor and the capacity of citizen ratepayers to support them.

The by-products of Phythian-Adams's researches are also important. His material on household size shows that by far the greatest number of families lived in nuclear households, so placing the important institution in an earlier period than has been generally accepted. Something like two-fifths of all analysable households in Coventry employed servants, including, as we

have seen, a proportion of those families who were too poor to contribute towards the subsidy. The figures show that about one-quarter of the total population were living in servants. He does not distinguish however between the different categories subsumed under this head—apprentices and in and out-servants: the evidence usually does not allow of such fine distinctions. Four-fifths of the population were part of the civic community in the sense of belonging to households where the head was a free journeyman or master. Phythian-Adams suggests that by the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century the rank of journeyman may have declined to unfree status although he also points out that the evidence is conflicting: for example, the Mercers' Company recorded the following minute in 1608: "Any person [may be] made a freeman of our Company... which he do occupy our trade, or do serve as a journeyman for wages". Phythian-Adams believes that journeymen in rich guilds, such as the Mercers' guild was, may have retained their free status.

From the pattern of residential distribution of wealth, it emerges that the model assumed for pre-industrial towns, in which the wealthy lived in the centre of the town and the poor on the periphery, works better for the centre of Coventry than for the outskirts: "there was no wholly consistent pattern with regard to... housing at the periphery", the author tells us. Interestingly, a very similar least and the point of the periphery for London in the early modern period. Like London too, there was considerable social intermingling throughout the city, every single ward having some housing of the wealthiest type. The craft system also with the upward rate of posts by which "the ancients" took turns to ascend the ladder of office-holding, created a surprising degree of social fluidity. Phythian-Adams concludes that in two of the larger crafts over a half of the office-holding class can be discerned as sensitive fellowships—perhaps benefiting of their entire membership at any one time—were able to rise and did so to the senior level."

Even by 1500 there was no domination of family oligarchies dominating the municipal crafts, although more oligarchic than the mercantile companies. On the other hand, since it was in the municipal trades that journeymen have retained their "free" status, certain exceptions have to be made even to this qualification. The last section of the book, which describes the slide towards oligarchy later in the century, is deliberately brief. The trend, evident in some regions, is not completely demonstrated by the evidence Phythian-Adams cites.

A fascinating short chapter describes a variety of contemporary ideas put forward on ways to halt Coventry's decline in both numbers and wealth, some of which filtered through to Thomas Cromwell. The most bizarre was proposed to preserve the monasteries by turning them into military establishments for a centrally imposed militia paid for and organized by the crown, but a plan, as the author says, which would have commended itself to many of Coventry's citizens, no matter how grave the decay of trade. Business may have been bad, but they were not the people to abandon their traditional privileges. The tantalizing footnote tells how the city was accompanied by representatives on a march out of the city to pull down hedges which had been erected by enclosures around the common fields. It is the minutiae of this episode: a moment of crisis when they do mention it, they should do so in terms of disgust. The commentary seems to be particularly rich on these poems, on such matters as simultaneous orgasm in male homosexual intercourse and the strange concept of a "lord of the manor" and the disease of a ragged fundement. One of the main contributions of this commentary is the sidelights it offers from the stews of eighteenth-century London. "Put no trust in the stern countenance of the philosopher," says Marlowe, "he got married yesterday to his boy friend" and Howell reports that the Vere Street coterie had a room called the Chapel "where marriages took place sometimes between a female grenadier, six feet high, and a petting partner more than half the size of the other."

Among the dozen court poems in this collection, two of them entered through the book celebrate Domitian's lions, that had been trained to play with harps in the amphitheatre. The first such poem, which they do catch up with, is a poem by Domitian to his friend, Cicero, an opportunity to discuss the problem that Hellenistic artists found in

bed taken from her for rent, or consider the churches in Germany. One sympathizes with William Law and brother Samuel as they cope with upbraiding from a Wesley whose conversion had not been off certain Pharisees. But then they were wrong about him and the volume ends with a splendid "World is my Part" letter, and with a hundred pages which are not so much letters as despatches from a Christian front line.

Slips, misprints and mistakes are insignificant in proportion to the enormous mass of information, and the handling of the bibliography details is masterly. But, in this second volume to appear, one continues to have misgivings about the printing of thousands upon thousands of scriptural references. Baker's dozen or so are missed by what the editor calls "an abundance of what the editor calls 'abundant misprints', which give the whole strangely eighteenth-century look of a letter, Bentley or even a letter, which are not so much letters as despatches from a Christian front line.

This is the first of five volumes of the correspondence of John Wesley, the first volume to appear in the Oxford edition of his letters. Wesley received (the register of all known correspondence which is planned will be a valuable tool for scholars). The volumes, despite their price, are intended for the general reader, and are closely annotated with a variety of which Wesley himself would have approved. To them, Frank Baker, the editor-in-chief of the edition, has brought the fruit of a life-long study and single-minded devotion to Wesley studies, which secure his eminence and perhaps his pre-eminence in a five-volume edition of letters from the time of Coke and Moore.

For some readers, the appeal of this volume may lie, less in its illumination of the career of the young Wesley, as on, as frustrated missionaries as budding evangelists, than in his personal relations, above all with his family. Some of the letters from his father, mother and brother almost steal the show.

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Rogue's gallery

By D. A. West

PETER HOWELL:
A Commentary on Book One of the
Epigrams of Martial
365pp. Athlone Press. £28.
0 485 13708 9

Martial is the Hogarth of Rome and the 119 poems in the first book of his epigrams form a characteristic collection of caricatures of contemporary society—the legacy-hunter marrying a woman for her cash; the doctor redeployed as an undertaker; the neighbour you never see and a host of victims chosen for their habits at table and in the bath; Foscoia who takes pastilles which sweeten her breath, till she burps; Acerra who makes sure that she does not smell of yesterday's wine by drinking all night; or Bassus who drinks from glass but has a golden chamber pot—it costs him more to crap."

About twenty of these poems are obscene or half-obscene, half-homosexual, including as Peter Howell interestingly points out, one of the very rare allusions to Lesbianism in Roman literature. "Perhaps it is not surprising that male writers should show little interest in the subject or that when they do mention it, they should do so in terms of disgust." The commentary seems to be particularly rich on these poems, on such matters as simultaneous orgasm in male homosexual intercourse and the strange concept of a "lord of the manor" and the disease of a ragged fundement. One of the main contributions of this commentary is the sidelights it offers from the stews of eighteenth-century London. "Put no trust in the stern countenance of the philosopher," says Marlowe, "he got married yesterday to his boy friend" and Howell reports that the Vere Street coterie had a room called the Chapel "where marriages took place sometimes between a female grenadier, six feet high, and a petting partner more than half the size of the other."

Among the dozen court poems in this collection, two of them entered through the book celebrate Domitian's lions, that had been trained to play with harps in the amphitheatre. The first such poem, which they do catch up with, is a poem by Domitian to his friend, Cicero, an opportunity to discuss the problem that Hellenistic artists found in

getting the cat's talons to lift Ganymede without seeming to scratch his skin. The second such poem suggests that the lion learnt mercy from Domitian; another that neither Domitian nor his lions attacked the weak; another propounds the paradox that the hare is safer in the lion's jaws than in its clutch; another urges upon the hare its unworthiness to receive such a noble death; another points out that the carcass of the hare is too small to offer the lion the separate joints of meat to which it is accustomed; the last and longest attributes the lion's performance not to training, but to the realization that their true master is Domitian. All this trivial ingenuity is ingenious, notably the final implicit compliment to Domitian on his clemency—demonstrates the rehandling of stock material which is the essence of the technique of Roman poetic and rhetorical invention.

This in turn goes back to Horace's image in which he addresses his book of Epistles as though it were a restless slave-boy eager to exchange the deep peace of the study for the hurly-burly of public life. In this connection, Latinists seem to need to be reminded that

concrete code") Courtney comes closer to an integrative view. But rather more might have been said about the grand manner: for with his addiction to epicurean Juvenal breaks with the previous tradition. It is particularly helpful now, at last, to have a full and rounded picture of this period, compounded from commonplace if we do not like that kind of thing, we can leave it alone. But if the "silver" procedures of theme and variation, convention and innovation, moralization and *sententiae* are at all to our taste, we can only begin to see the wealth of the source involved by reading our Seneca and our Plutarch, by knowing our poets, and by rifling rhetorical theory for its prescriptions about the mechanics of composition.

In his remaining objectives I would take issue with Courtney about policy and distribution. When explaining "the poet's words" Courtney for some reason often fights shy of a straightforward explanation. He admits to being brief on "grammar, idiom and silver Latin style": yet, when there is doubt about a reading, he is often very full (e.g. on V, 104-6), quoting in extent and rehearsing prior arguments. Economy may pardon the absence of a text: but why a compromise, print doubtful lines and solutions in the commentary itself?

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Room for revolution

By George Rudé

OLWEN HUTTON:
Europe: Privilege and Protest 1730-1789
398pp. Pomsana. Paperback. £2.50 (hardback, Harvester £14.50).
0 00 636109 9

Any historian called upon to write a history of eighteenth-century Europe is bound to be faced with a choice of problems: how to arrange it and what to call it. The eighteenth century readily becomes an Age of Crisis or an Age of Revolution and the nineteenth century, if not quite so monolithic, may, without straining too far from its general direction, be termed the Age of Capitalism or Liberalism and Industrial Revolution. But what is the central focus of a century that ranges over such varied themes as agrarian revolution, demographic explosion, Enlightenment, Royal Absolutism and aristocratic privilege, popular protest and the bourgeois challenge, commercial expansion and colonial wars; one that includes, moreover, the American Revolution and leads up to the French? The French themselves find it natural enough to call it *le siècle des lumières*; far nor not, the Enlightenment and the Revolution that it heralded their own? Others have preferred to champion other claims and christen it, such as *The Age of Absolutism* or *The Age of the Aristocratic Reaction*. Olwen Hutton recognizes that none of these titles is sufficiently comprehensive and has chosen to give her own book a two-theme title rather than one.

Yet, strangely, neither of her two selected themes figures at all prominently in the book. It is true that Privilege has a chapter of its own which reveals, in multifarious guises, as it is shown to do from the noble rich to the comparatively poor, but thus presented, its privileges lose their sting and cease to be the bogey that, in the

early days of revolution, eclipsed royal "despotism" as Public Enemy Number One. "Protest", too, hardly deserves the dramatic importance accorded to it on the title-page. For one thing, bourgeois protest—surely a major theme in the struggle against both tyranny and privilege—is little more than a footnote until the summer of 1789. "Popular" protest receives a fuller treatment; and Professor Hutton rightly acknowledges that "the poor themselves [that is the very poor whose history she has told elsewhere with great skill and compassion] were not protestors"; but rather "those fighting to remain on the right side of the line marking sufficiency from destitution". As at these whose protest she describes—though not all—she is in the accounts given in the *Equilibras* riots in Madrid in 1766 and of the French *guerre des farines* of 1775.

But, title-page notwithstanding, little attempt is made to knit these examples together within a general European framework or to assess their importance as a historical phenomenon. Professor Hutton repeats the French ambassador's description of the Dutch Patriot movement as being largely composed of the class of bourgeois. True enough; but equally relevant was John Bull's comment on the Patriots' defeat by the English and Prussians: that their failure was largely due to the lack of attention they had paid "to the sense of the common people". By 1789 the French middle classes had learnt their lesson and, though this (though Professor Hutton fails to note it) is one good reason why the French succeeded in their "democratic" revolution while the Dutch and Belgians, having failed in their first attempt, had to make their second bid in the wake of the French.

Nevertheless, this is a well-illustrated and excellently presented book. The author has chosen to eschew current fashions and to present from its contribution to commercial and colonial wars to her British from Europe (which, though not

entirely uncommon, appears odd to this reviewer). Apart from this, the European pattern is well maintained. The first four and the final chapters are set in a European context, while the remaining seven are devoted to single countries or regions spread over central, eastern and western Europe. In this way a happy balance is struck between analysis and narrative.

Although the author's treatment of such themes as commercial and colonial wars and the territorial expansion of Russia and Prussia under their "enlightened despots" follows a conventional pattern, she is no great respecter of ancient slithers and does her fair share of tilting at sacred cows. She has no great regard for the Enlightenment as an educational force and appears to doubt if it had any influence whatsoever on the popular classes. More significant perhaps—and here she is at variance with her old mentor, the late Alfred Cobban—is her recognition of the useful services played at times by that band of liberal historians, the *Paris Parlement*. Accordingly, she finds very little good to say about Turgot, the darling of many a Radical historian, whose obstinate adherence to Physiocratic theory (and these are my words, not hers) curiously anticipates the arguments and activities of our "monetarists" today. Another villain is the Marquis de Pombal, who, achieved prominence by his handling of the crisis of the Lisbon earthquake, yet, despite his enlightened savagery in treating Jews and some of the older noble families, he should, perhaps, be given some credit for the tolerance he showed, both at home and abroad, to blacks and Jews. Again, Professor Hutton is right to praise about the Russian, and German, Enlightenment, but she is wrong in showing almost unmitigated praise for Frederick of Prussia, admiring Catherine of Russia without too hot a word for her handling of the Polish and the well-known Jewish pogroms of 1791.

There is a great deal to be said for this book. It is a well-illustrated and excellently presented book. The author has chosen to eschew current fashions and to present from its contribution to commercial and colonial wars to her British from Europe (which, though not

Evangelist in embryo

By Gordon Rupp

FRANK BAKER (Editor):
The Works of John Wesley
Volume 25: Letters 1: 1721-1739
763pp. Clarendon Press: Oxford University Press. £35.
0 19 812545 3

This is the first of five volumes of the correspondence of John Wesley, the first volume to appear in the Oxford edition of his letters. Wesley received (the register of all known correspondence which is planned will be a valuable tool for scholars). The volumes, despite their price, are intended for the general reader, and are closely annotated with a variety of which Wesley himself would have approved. To them, Frank Baker, the editor-in-chief of the edition, has brought the fruit of a life-long study and single-minded devotion to Wesley studies, which secure his eminence and perhaps his pre-eminence in a five-volume edition of letters from the time of Coke and Moore.

For some readers, the appeal of this volume may lie, less in its illumination of the career of the young Wesley, as on, as frustrated missionaries as budding evangelists, than in his personal relations, above all with his family. Some of the letters from his father, mother and brother almost steal the show.

Wesley wrote rather grudging letters to his Cotswold lady friends, and to his London friends, and to his own sisters, who gave the letters to him. Some of the letters, which are not so much letters as despatches from a Christian front line, are of a kind which would have been of interest to Wesley himself.

Slips, misprints and mistakes are insignificant in proportion to the enormous mass of information, and the handling of the bibliography details is masterly. But, in this second volume to appear, one continues to have misgivings about the printing of thousands upon thousands of scriptural references. Baker's dozen or so are missed by what the editor calls "an abundance of what the editor calls 'abundant misprints', which give the whole strangely eighteenth-century look of a letter, Bentley or even a letter, which are not so much letters as despatches from a Christian front line.

One sympathizes with William Law and brother Samuel as they cope with upbraiding from a Wesley whose conversion had not been off certain Pharisees. But then they were wrong about him and the volume ends with a splendid "World is my Part" letter, and with a hundred pages which are not so much letters as despatches from a Christian front line.

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The popular element

By Peter Garnsey

CLAUDE NICOLÉ:
The World of the Citizen in Republican Rome
Translated by P. S. Falla
435pp. Clarendon Press.
0 19 812545 3

This is the first of the second edition of *Le monde du citoyen dans la Rome républicaine* (first ed. Gallimard, Paris, 1976), a significant work by a distinguished and prolific historian of the Roman Republic. In a new preface Claude Nicolé lists recent bibliography and repeats briefly his criticisms. Apart from minor corrections, no changes have been made to the original text.

The first of Nicolé's numerous books to be translated into English, *Le monde du citoyen* deserves wide exposure because it deals in a bold way with an important subject: the involvement in civil life of ordinary Roman citizens, as distinct from the political elite of Rome. The author's conclusion is that the "popular element" was largely excluded from the political life of Rome. The author's conclusion is that the "popular element" was largely excluded from the political life of Rome.

There are such common irrelevances as the news that August 30th, 1780, aged 85, was buried in the grave of the second wife, while the first was buried in the grave of the first wife. The book is a masterpiece of editing, and the letters are of a kind which would have been of interest to Wesley himself.

to be. The innovative element is largely at the periphery; at its core it is solidly traditional in its devotion to empirical description on a massive scale backed by extensive quotation of sources. It can be granted that simply by focusing on the mass of citizens rather than the privileged few Nicolé has broken away from mainstream political history. But in practice the ordinary Roman has been overshadowed by the political, financial and military institutions themselves, which are surveyed in lavish detail. The explanation for this imbalance is that by setting himself the question of the extent of popular participation in the civic institutions of Rome, and by giving that question a largely negative answer (quite rightly, Nicolé has left himself with too little to say on the subject of "the people"). His approach is simply too narrow; he has drawn little on the work of social and economic historians, long concerned with the lower classes, whether citizens or slaves. He has avoided religion altogether. Finally, while he includes interesting but tantalizingly brief speculations on the educational level of the Roman plebs, he largely bypasses cultural questions.

This leads to occasional crudity of interpretation, as where the greater ferocity of citizens' attitudes after the Social War is ascribed to the influence of recently naturalized Italians, whose ways were "still barbarous and uncouth". This may also serve as an illustration of Nicolé's relative neglect of the "popular element" in Roman life, for from those resident in Rome, against the evidence of the harshness of his theme, if he had expanded the analytical sections of his book at this

expense of the descriptive, cut back on source-quotation (which on the scale on which it is indulged in here is more appropriate to a standard source-book than an avant-garde historical study), and broadened the base of his study of the *populus Romanus*; he might have produced a volume of greater originality and impact which would genuinely have appealed to social scientists and the more progressive political historians of all periods. He may still write such a book and nobody is better qualified than he, for in *Les structures de l'Italie romaine*, published in 1977, the year after *Le monde du citoyen*, he has extended his coverage of civic life to take in demographic, economic and social issues.

In the work under review, however, Nicolé appears as a historian of institutions, not a historian of the people. His approach is simply too narrow; he has drawn little on the work of social and economic historians, long concerned with the lower classes, whether citizens or slaves. He has avoided religion altogether. Finally, while he includes interesting but tantalizingly brief speculations on the educational level of the Roman plebs, he largely bypasses cultural questions.

the abandonment of this principle a century later. Again, the assertion that individual liberties in the sense of equality of legal rights remained meaningful for the humblest as well as the patricians they could face court proceedings "with confidence" because of patronal support must be argued for; it cannot merely be assumed, especially for the last century and a half of the Republic.

Of the central chapters, the sixth, dealing with the citizen and the treasury, best exemplifies Nicolé's strengths. It should be read in conjunction with a work published in the same year (1976), *Trésor, Recherches sur la fiscalité dracénienne sous la République Romaine*, which indicates Nicolé as perhaps the leading authority on Roman public finance under the Republic. In other sections he inevitably draws on the extensive researches of others, among contemporaries those of, for example, Lily Ross Taylor on *nummi* and P. A. Brunt and G. B. H. on the military. Even so the pronouncements of a scholar of Nicolé's calibre are usually worthy of our attention, while his regular signalling of areas that would repay the attention of scholars is itself a reminder of his own mastery of a wide range of subjects.

The last chapter, "Popularitas, the rise of 'alternative' institutions" is the most enjoyable and stimulating in the book. It discusses the emerging political importance of public opinion as expressed in the setting of spectacles, meetings and court cases, and makes one wish that Nicolé had placed less emphasis on his ideal reconstruction of Roman public life, and more on the symptoms of dysfunction, transformation and decline.

Of these aims the second is the most important, and in its acquisition

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